



## THE FUTURE OF NURSING EDUCATION – A WHITE PAPER

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### ABSTRACT

Nursing and education, time-honored professions that depend on one another, but over time have evolved at different rates. The nursing evolution has rocketed into a new era that precipitates daily change. Education, while imperative to the nursing field, has often lagged behind the transformation curve.

Entrepreneurs in higher education are answering the call for change. University leaders have recognized the need to revolutionize not only the curricula in nursing education, but also how, when, and where degree programs are offered. Innovations such as partner-focused programs, credit-based competency degrees and curricula incorporating digital experiences are driving change in nursing education.

This white paper discusses the evolution of nursing, the current impetus for change influenced by the National Academy of Medicine (formerly the Institute of Medicine), the challenges in nursing education, and solutions to meet industry demands.

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## INTRODUCTION

Since 1854 when Florence Nightingale first demonstrated the value of military nurses during the Crimean War, nursing has continuously evolved. In the last decade the evolution has accelerated, not only to keep up with the need of patients and global public health care, but also to meet efficiency and cost demands. Modern disruption in health care is influenced by the government, insurance companies, pharmaceutical companies, health care systems, patients, health care professionals, and technology.

The evolution has changed the role of nurses, from a physician's assistant to an invaluable professional on the care team. Nurses now hold positions as leaders at facilities, in health care systems, and in the global health care industry. To ensure nurses are receiving the education they need, where they need it and with relevant curricula, advanced education must evolve. Agile universities are leading the change, offering programs that meet facility/health systems' needs, are competency-based educational solutions, and provide digital innovations.

## BACKGROUND

In a world that changes every day, how is it possible to meet the demands of all stakeholders? Clearly, institutions of higher learning utilizing only the traditional forms of teaching and learning cannot meet the demands of nursing today, and will be left behind tomorrow.

### The Need for Advanced Nursing Education

The Institute of Medicine published the report, *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, in October 2010, outlining the need for highly educated nurses:

In the 21st century, the health challenges facing the nation have shifted dramatically. The American population is older—Americans 65 and older will be nearly 20 percent of the population by 2030—as well as more diverse with respect not only to race and ethnicity but also other cultural and socioeconomic factors. In addition to shifts in the nation's demographics, there also have been shifts in that nation's health care needs. Most health care today relates to chronic

conditions, such as diabetes, hypertension, arthritis, cardiovascular disease, and mental health conditions, due in part to the nation's aging population and compounded by increasing obesity levels. While chronic conditions account for most of the care needed today, the U.S. health care system was primarily built around treating acute illnesses and injuries, the predominant health challenges of the early 20th century.

The ways in which nurses were educated during the 20th century are no longer adequate for dealing with the realities of health care in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As patient needs and care environments have become more complex, nurses need to attain requisite competencies to deliver high-quality care. These competencies include leadership, health policy, system improvement, research and evidence-based practice, and teamwork and collaboration, as well as competency in specific content areas such as community and public health and geriatrics. Nurses also are being called upon to fill expanding roles and to master technological tools and information management systems while collaborating and coordinating care across teams of health professionals. To respond to these increasing demands, the IOM committee calls for nurses to achieve higher levels of education and suggests that they be educated in new ways that better prepare them to meet the needs of the population. ([nationalacademies.org](http://nationalacademies.org))

\*see *Figure 1* for the IOM Infographic on the Future of Nursing

While the IOM is not the only respected health care organization calling for an increase in the level of education for nurses, it is widely being used as the standard. Additionally, the American Nurse Credentialing Center has created the Magnet Recognition Program® which also incorporates the 80 percent BSN by the year 2020 idea, supporting the idea that advanced nursing education ensures quality.

## Nursing Education Challenges

The 2014 Assessing Progress on the Institute of Medicine Report *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health* found that the number of post licensure baccalaureate programs has increased. (Altman, Butler and Shern, 2016) However, roadblocks still remain for nurses working to earn an advanced degree (bachelor of science nursing, master of science nursing and doctorate of nursing practice).

Nurses working full-time have often faced the challenges of shift work and struggle to find time to attend class. Working in rural or remote locations can also impede access to nursing degree programs. While the last decade has given rise to many new programs, the future of nursing education lies with institutions that are changing at, or faster than, the evolution of nursing.

## SOLUTIONS

The future of nursing education has been defined by the needs of the health care industry, and by nurses themselves. Feedback from prospective and current nursing students shows that nurses not only need education that fits their busy lives, but also enables them to learn at their own pace, fitting their style of learning, and includes curricula relevant to health care now, and in the future. Universities that stay ahead of the curve and innovate new methods of teaching and learning, are the future of nursing education.

Universities leading the way:

- provide quality degree programs aligned with the needs of the market (working closely with hospital partners to establish programs and curricula to meet diverse and shifting needs)
- offer innovative ways for nurses to demonstrate their knowledge, and also show competency by non-traditional methods (competency-based education)
- include technology in the curricula that allows students to explore and learn beyond the traditional classroom (virtual simulations)

### *Education Partnerships*

“Non-traditional schools, such as American Sentinel University, are not caught in the bureaucracy that slows down many schools,” says Dr. Elaine Foster, Dean, Nursing and Health Care Programs, American Sentinel University. “We can establish partnerships with facilities and health care systems and quickly get feedback on their needs.” Educational partnerships with respected health care organizations are invaluable to progressing health care, nursing and education.

American Sentinel has partnered with more than 120 health care systems and facilities around the United States. These partners consistently provide



information to the university on their changing needs, allowing the university to make adjustments, fulfilling the educational partnership.

“The partnership with American Sentinel University has provided our RNs with a smooth transition for returning to school and has played a pivotal role in increasing our RN to BSN rates.” Deborah Lumpkins, MSN, RN, Senior Vice President, Patient Care Services, Chief Nursing Officer at Maury Regional Medical Center.

American Sentinel, at the request of a long-time partner, Geisinger, the university created cohorts for Geisinger nurses to enhance the student experience and help the organization progress toward Magnet® status.

“Encouraging our employees to obtain BSN degrees is an important mission of Geisinger and we have identified American Sentinel University as an education partner that will offer our nurses a quality education with online flexibility and very strong student support services,” say Terri Bickert, DNP, RN, NE-BC, vice president of nursing, system education, and research and Magnet®, Geisinger. “This partnership will help us reach our goals.”

### *Competency-Based Educational Solutions*

Traditional course-based programs, whether on-campus or online, can limit students in the way they learn, and the way they demonstrate mastery of course-work. (often requiring written papers and discussions without flexibility for new approaches). As discussed above nursing is changing daily. The health care industry is rapidly evolving, and nurses need education that allows them to keep pace. Competency-based learning is not new, however incorporating it into a program such as the new RN to BSN, CBE powered by *SIMPath*™ at American Sentinel is cutting-edge.

The RN to BSN, CBE Powered by *SIMPath*™ is an innovative way for nurses to earn their degree. The program consists of 10 competencies in which students can progress at their own rate. Seasoned nurses can demonstrate their knowledge and experience to progress more quickly through material they know. This allows nurses to finish the Bachelor of Science Nursing in less time (also saving money). But this is not the only benefit of this program.

Instead of the traditional papers and discussion questions of course-based programs, the competencies include projects in which students show their skills in unique ways, such as presentations, posters, videos, or any way that shows mastery of the skills. This allows unparalleled flexibility and creativity for nursing



students. The competencies are cross-walked (mapped) to the quality curricula in the course-based RN to BSN degree program to ensure learning outcome quality.

One more advantage of this new teaching and learning concept is that unlike other competency-based education programs, the RN to BSN, CBE Powered by *SIMPath*<sup>™</sup> competencies earn credit hours, enabling students to transfer in and out of the program and while maintaining credit for previously completed work.

The benefit to nursing students, and the health care industry, is that they can leverage knowledge they already have while learning new skills that are relevant and immediately impactful in their careers, all at a pace fitting their careers and personal lives. This makes a degree more attainable while improving patient outcomes, benefiting employers, and moving the profession closer to the IOM 2020 goals.

### *Digital Innovations*

Few online institutions are working toward becoming a completely digital university. The vision of a true digital university incorporates technology into coursework, processes, and every part of the student experience.

*SIMPath*<sup>™</sup> (currently powering the new RN to BSN, CBE, eventually to be incorporated into the master's programs) is one of many digital initiatives at American Sentinel. *SIMPath*<sup>™</sup> uses digital simulations throughout the degree program, enabling students to experience real-world situations from any location. Students complete projects in Sentinel World<sup>™</sup> (comprised of Sentinel City<sup>®</sup> and Sentinel Town<sup>®</sup>) from the comfort of their own home (or work station, or wherever is convenient for them). The digital simulations allow students to experience emergencies or evaluate communities to which they otherwise would not have exposure to. In addition, they are able to master new competencies, such as evaluating the vaccine management of a small town, and create policies and processes to ensure the health of all community members.

This new andragogy is the future of nursing education. The benefits to the nursing student include exposure to new situations and curricula on their time table and in the way they learn. It broadens the scope of learning for all students, delivering educated nurses that can manage, lead and create better efficiencies, outcomes and better bottom lines for facilities.

## CONCLUSION



Health care and nursing are constantly evolving, and universities can choose to follow, or they can lead the transformation. New demands on nurses, including increased pressure for efficiencies and cost management, have created the need for new options in nursing education.

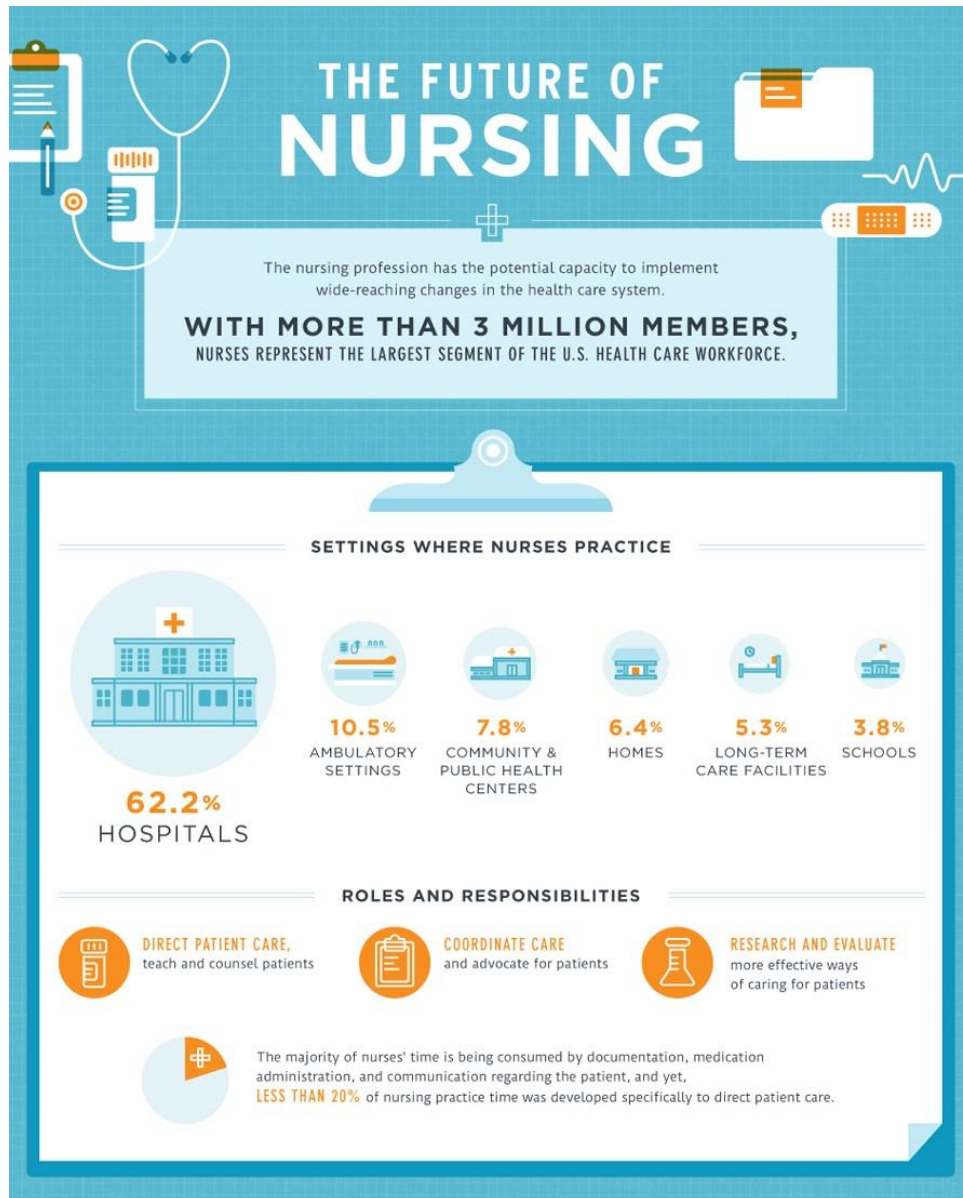
To successfully provide degree programs for today's nurses, institutions of higher education must innovate. They must provide solutions such as building strong health care partnerships, incorporating new curricula (competency-based education), and leveraging new teaching and learning methods (*SIMPath*<sup>™</sup>).

In health care and education today, the old adage, "If you are not moving forward, you are standing still" is not only true, but could be adjusted to: If you are not moving forward, you may actually be going backwards.

American Sentinel University is moving faster than the speed of health care.



Figure 1



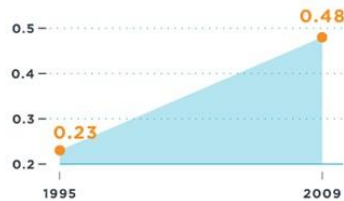
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## TRANSFORMING PRACTICE

### NURSES AND PRIMARY CARE

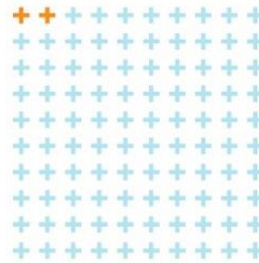
Nurses provide primary care services across the spectrum of health care settings. The range of possibilities for nurses providing primary care is significant, and their capacity for filling these roles is not always recognized.

Numbers of nurse practitioners and physician assistants are steadily INCREASING.



BETWEEN 1995 AND 2009, THE NUMBER OF NURSE PRACTITIONERS PER PRIMARY CARE MD MORE THAN DOUBLED, from 0.23 to 0.48. The number of physician assistants per primary care MD also increased.

Numbers of medical students and residents entering primary care are DECREASING.



A 2008 SURVEY OF MEDICAL STUDENTS FOUND ONLY 2% PLANNED CAREERS IN GENERAL INTERNAL MEDICINE.

IT IS POSSIBLE TO INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF BOTH NPs AND PAs IN A RELATIVELY SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME, HELPING TO MEET AN INCREASED DEMAND FOR CARE, INCLUDING CARING FOR UP TO 32 MILLION PREVIOUSLY UNINSURED AMERICANS.

### NURSES SHOULD PRACTICE TO THE FULL EXTENT OF THEIR EDUCATION AND TRAINING.

REGULATIONS THAT DEFINE SCOPE-OF-PRACTICE limitations vary widely by state based on the political decisions of the state in which they work.

The same nurse practitioner would be required to have more physician oversight in Kansas City, Missouri, than across the state line in Kansas City, Kansas.



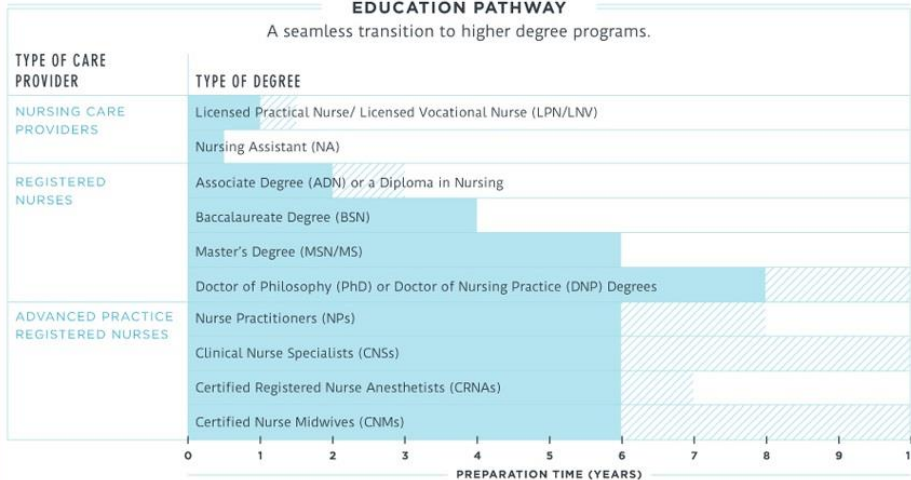
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## TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

To meet health care's growing demands, nurses must be competent in several disciplines, such as leadership, system improvement, research, teamwork and collaboration and public health. Nurses are also expanding into technology and information management roles.

### EDUCATION PATHWAY

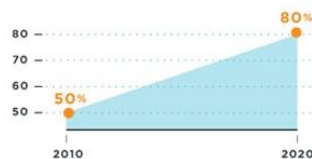
A seamless transition to higher degree programs.



NURSES AT ALL LEVELS SHOULD CONTINUE TO ENGAGE IN LIFELONG LEARNING.

### HIGHER ED GOALS

**INCREASE THE NUMBER OF NURSES WITH BACCALAUREATE DEGREES FROM 50% TO 80% BY 2020.**



#### HOW:

- Tuition reimbursement
- Scholarships and loan forgiveness
- Increase higher ed faculty
- Expand clinical partnerships

**DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF NURSES WITH A DOCTORAL DEGREE BY 2020.**



ALTHOUGH 13% OF NURSES hold a graduate degree, fewer than 1 percent (28,369 nurses) have a doctoral degree in nursing or a nursing-related field.

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## TRANSFORMING LEADERSHIP



THE NURSING PROFESSION MUST PRODUCE  
— LEADERS FROM THE —  
BEDSIDE TO THE BOARDROOM.



### NURSES MUST SEE THEMSELVES AS LEADERS

Leadership that involves working with others as full partners with mutual respect and collaboration is needed and has been associated with:



**IMPROVED TEAMWORK**  
and patient outcomes



**COST SAVINGS**  
and a reduction in medical errors



**INCREASED JOB SATISFACTION**  
and retention among nurses

### UNDERREPRESENTED ON INSTITUTION AND HOSPITAL BOARDS

Recent surveys have found that nurses are underrepresented...

#### IN HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SYSTEMS



**ONLY 0.8%**  
of voting board members in institutions and  
hospitals were chief nursing officers (CNOs)



**COMPARED WITH 5.1%**  
who were vice presidents  
for medical affairs

#### IN COMMUNITY HEALTH SYSTEMS



**ONLY 2.3%**  
of nurses occupied seats on  
institution and hospital boards



**COMPARED WITH 22.61%**  
who were physicians

**NURSES SHOULD BE PREPARED TO  
LEAD CHANGE TO ADVANCE HEALTH.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [WWW.IOM.EDU/NURSING](http://WWW.IOM.EDU/NURSING)

#### SOURCES

IOM (Institute of Medicine). 2011. The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health.  
Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

(<http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Reports/2010/The-Future-of-Nursing-Leading-Change-Advancing-Health.aspx>)

## RESOURCES

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK350166/>

<https://www.nap.edu/download/21838>

<https://www.americannursetoday.com/advancing-toward-an-80-bsn-workforce-by-2020/>

<http://www.nursecredentialing.org/Pathway/PathwayResources/PathwayBenefitsPDF.pdf>

[http://www.reflectionsonnursingleadership.org/features/more-features/Vol38\\_1\\_an-80-bsn-workforce-by-2020](http://www.reflectionsonnursingleadership.org/features/more-features/Vol38_1_an-80-bsn-workforce-by-2020)

<http://www.nursecredentialing.org/Magnet/ProgramOverview>

<https://nursejournal.org/articles/the-future-of-nursing-infographic/>

<http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Reports/2010/The-Future-of-Nursing-Leading-Change-Advancing-Health.aspx>

<https://www.nursingjobs.com/advanced-education-critical-to-nursing-success/>

<http://www.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/ThePracticeofProfessionalNursing/workforce/IOM-Future-of-Nursing-Report-1>

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<file:///C:/Users/Cody7/OneDrive/Documents/ASU/Nursing%20Education%202010%20Brief.pdf>

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